

REMARKS

Claims 1-13 have been examined, and claims 1, 2, 6, 7, and 11-13 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b). Also, the Examiner has indicated that claims 3-5 and 8-10 contain allowable subject matter.

**I. Rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) over JP 06-261316 to Wakahara et al.
("Wakahara")**

Claims 1, 2, 6, 7, and 11-13 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Wakahara. Applicants submit that the claims are patentable over the reference.

A. Claim 1

Claim 1 states that a maximum connection line number N of participant terminals, which are connectable to a promoter terminal, is previously set. Furthermore, the connection line number M of participant terminals which are connected to the promoter terminal is set to be less than or equal to the maximum connection line number N, and the maximum connection line number N is less than a total number of potential connection lines between the promoter terminal and the participant terminals.

On the other hand, Wakahara does not disclose or suggest the features of claim 1. As shown in Fig. 1 of the reference, the system includes one control unit 300 and four television conference terminals 302-305. Also, the reference discloses that each of the terminals 302-305 possibly may conduct bidirectional communication with the control unit 300:

In addition, about the data signal, a bidirectional packet circuit is set up between each television conference terminals 302-305 and the television conference control unit 300 between many points, and two-way communication is possible if needed.

(Computer-generated translation at Paragraph 0012).

On page 2 of the Office Action, the Examiner notes that the four terminals 302-305 are connected to the control unit 300 and contends that such structure implies a maximum connection line number N. In light of the disclosure of Paragraph 0012, the Examiner seems to maintain that, since all four terminals 302-305 may perform bidirectional or two-way communication with the control unit 300, "if needed," the maximum connection line number N equals eight (*i.e.*, four terminals 302-305 x two-way communication). Since the maximum connection line number N is based on the number of terminals 302-305 in the system, the Examiner appears to contend that the line number N is previously set. In other words, the maximum connection line number N equals a total number of potential connection lines between the control unit 300 and the terminals 302-305.

However, claim 1 states that the maximum connection line number N is less than a total number of potential connection lines between the promoter terminal and the participant terminals. Accordingly, Applicants submit that claim 1 is patentable.

B. Claim 2

Since claim 2 depends upon claim 1, Applicants submit that claim 2 is patentable at least by virtue of its dependency.

C. Claim 6

Since claim 6 contains features that are similar to the features discussed above in conjunction with claim 1, Applicants submit that claim 6 is patentable for similar reasons.

D. Claims 7 and 11

Since claims 7 and 11 depend upon claim 6, Applicants submit that the claims are patentable at least by virtue of their dependency.

E. Claims 12 and 13

Since claims 12 and 13 contain features that are similar to the features discussed above in conjunction with claim 1, Applicants submit that the claims are patentable for similar reasons.

II. Allowable subject matter

The Examiner has objected to claims 3-5 and 8-10 for being dependent upon rejected base claim 1 or 6, but states that they would be allowed if they are rewritten in independent form. Since claims 3 and 8 have been rewritten in independent form, Applicants submit that they are allowable.

III. Newly added claims

Applicants have added new claims 14 and 15. Since such claims depend upon claim 3 or 8, Applicants submit that they are allowable at least by virtue of their dependency.

IV. Conclusion

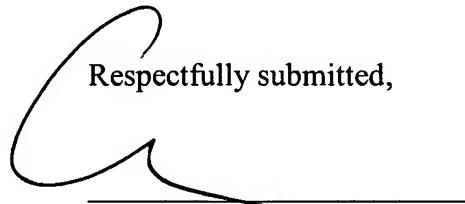
In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the

AMENDMENT UNDER 37 C.F.R. § 1.111
U.S. Appln. No. 10/687,646

Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,



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